

The bull

When I've done really stupid things in the past, I like to blame youth, alcohol, or testosterone, but in this story I was 42 years old and fairly sober.

In the summer of '98, in the midst of a divorce, I spent some time hanging out with my friend Josh in southern Missouri. We ran the brush hog on his ranch, floated down a river on inner-tubes and went to a seedy strip club. Although in our defense, not all three at the same time.

One day a friend of his said that he had been to the local rodeo the night before, and that they had a fun contest for audience members. He said they set up a card table and four chairs in the middle of the arena, and if you volunteered to sit there, you just had to be the last person seated after they released a bull into the ring. He said as soon as people saw the bull coming towards them they got up and ran, and the last person seated won an easy \$100. Sounds like a perfectly reasonable thing to do, right? We evidently thought so.

The next night Josh and I went to the rodeo and at some point they made an announcement for people who would want to play this game called "Mexican poker". We went up to the announcers booth and signed our lives away on a legal form that did not seem nearly adequate for the potential risk involved. By this point some alcohol became involved, so by the time our names were called to walk out onto the dirt field in front of all those people, we were less concerned than we should have been.

There were four of us geniuses seated on cheap, dirty plastic chairs with our hands on top of an equally filthy plastic card table. I was soon to find out why they didn't bring out the fine China. My brother raises bulls, so I had seen them from a safe distance and they still seemed huge. I cannot begin to tell you how large they are when you're in a chair and looking up at one. At first, the bull just wandered around checking us out and sniffing the air. I thought for sure he would be able to hear my heart hammering away in my chest. This was the point at which the reality of the situation dawned on me, and by then it was really too late to run.

He evidently was not angry enough, so a rodeo clown came out to taunt the beast and get him interested in our group. It must've worked, because before I knew it, this bull, for no reason whatsoever, knocked Josh out his seat and then hit me from behind with what felt like the impact of a truck. I went flying through the air, the table and chairs were crushed, and the four of us went running towards the stands, quickly jumping over a fence that without all that adrenaline would have been too tall to scale. The audience was laughing hysterically, and for some reason or another I was not mortally wounded.

The worst part was that neither of us won the hundred bucks!

<https://youtu.be/Tv4rVEkRa3s>

